



### Why This Matters

Although DHS prohibits social media access to employees using a government-issued electronic device or computer unless a waiver or exception is granted, the Department has steadily increased its use of various social media sites over the past 5 years. The Department and each of the seven operational components have established accounts on commonly used social media sites for outreach purposes. DHS and its operational components also use social media to gain situational awareness and support mission operations, including law enforcement and intelligence-gathering efforts.

### DHS Response

The Acting Chief Privacy Officer concurred with two recommendations and provided details on how these recommendations would be achieved. The Acting Chief Privacy Officer non-concurred with three recommendations.

#### For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at [DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov)

## DHS Uses Social Media to Enhance Information Sharing and Mission Operations, But Additional Oversight and Guidance are Needed

### What We Determined

Public affairs employees have had wide success using social media sites to share information and conduct public outreach efforts. These initiatives were effectively managed and administered by Department and component level public affairs offices. In addition, component public affairs offices have implemented policies and procedures to provide guidance and standards to employees.

The Department and components have found value in using social media for operational purposes; however, the following areas need attention in order for the Department to assess all of the benefits and risks of using social media to support mission operations:

- 1) Additional oversight and guidance are needed to ensure that employees use technologies appropriately.
- 2) Improvements are needed for centralized oversight to ensure that leadership is aware of how social media is being used and for better coordination to share best practices.

### What We Recommend

We recommend that the DHS:

- 1) Office of Public Affairs, in coordination with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, communicate the Department's process for gaining access to social media for employees with an approved business need.
- 2) Office of Public Affairs, in coordination with the Privacy Office, develop and maintain a list of approved social media accounts and owners throughout the Department.
- 3) Office of Policy complete the Department-wide social media policy to provide legal, privacy, and information security guidelines for approved uses of social media.
- 4) Privacy Office ensure that components develop and implement social media policies.
- 5) Office of Public Affairs establish a forum for the Department and its components to collaborate and make decisions on the use of social media tools for public affairs purposes and that the Privacy Office, in coordination with the Office of Operations Coordination and Planning, establish a forum for the Department and its component to collaborate and make decisions on the use of social media tools for operational purposes.